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TAGS: ENRG KNNP PREL PGOV JO
SUBJECT: JORDAN BRIEFS ISRAEL ON NUCLEAR ENERGY PLANS

REF: A. AMMAN 1319
1B. AMMAN 825
1C. 07 AMMAN 3656
1D. 07 AMMAN 939

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: After consistent prodding from Post since 2007 for the Government of Jordan (GOJ) to engage the Israelis on its nuclear energy plans, Jordanian officials briefed an Israeli delegation on June 11 about the development of Jordan's nuclear energy program (reftels). According to Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Yaakov Rosen, the meeting revealed the Jordanians' lack of understanding regarding environmental issues, seismology, and financial requirements. The delegations agreed to form three technical working groups and conduct exchanges between Jordan and Israel that could help address some of these issues in the future. End Summary.

12. (C) Rosen gave a read-out to the Ambassador on a three-hour meeting on June 11 between Jordanian and Israeli officials regarding Jordan's nuclear energy plans. Participants on the Jordanian side included, among others, Chairman of the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) Khaled Toukan, JAEC Commissioner Kamal Araij, Fayed Batanieh from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and Jafar Hassan from the Royal Court. The Israeli delegation included the head of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission and experts on licensing, safety, and geology. The Jordanian delegation asserted that nuclear energy would safeguard Jordan's energy needs for the next 80 to 90 years. Toukan ran down the list of countries that the GOJ has engaged on nuclear cooperation to date, including Russia, China, France, Korea, Canada, the U.K., Spain, Czech Republic, Argentina, Romania, Japan, and the U.S. (ref B). In response to a question about whether the GOJ has talked to Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Toukan replied that the GOJ would meet with the Egyptians and Saudis soon.

13. (C) Regarding proliferation, Toukan highlighted that

Jordan is a member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and would not give up its rights under the NPT to refine and enrich uranium. He clarified that it was not currently feasible for Jordan to enrich uranium, so Jordan would need to secure a guaranteed supply from major international suppliers. For that reason, Jordan supported the idea of an international fuel bank but also needed a "fall back position" of being able to refine and enrich uranium in the future in case the supply line failed (ref A).

¶4. (C) The Israelis raised environmental concerns about brine water being discharged into the Red Sea, but Toukan replied that Jordan was looking at options to ensure no waste water from the plant would be pumped into the surrounding area. He cited as possible options closed cooling towers and pumping the water into the Dead Sea. The Israeli delegation also expressed concerns about the site selection of Aqaba being near a fault line, and the Israeli geologist gave a presentation on seismic issues on the Israeli side of the rift valley. The Jordanians responded that Japan also has earthquake problems but still builds nuclear power plants, which the Israelis acknowledged as true but also extremely costly. The Jordanians then assured their Israeli counterparts that the winds blow southwest, not northwest towards Israel. Rosen said that the meeting revealed that the Jordanians did not have a good understanding yet of seismology, environmental issues, or financial requirements. Toukan conveyed the impression that the GOJ expected to pay an initial \$2 billion and then incur no further expenses, but Rosen noted that the costs are endless with a nuclear program.

¶5. (C) Rosen indicated that the meeting was useful in that the Jordanians now understand how much the Israelis know and offered to keep them updated on every milestone, including proliferation and recycling of fuel once ideas have crystallized. The delegations also agreed to form three working groups on geology and siting, water, and regulations that will meet every six months. Additionally, the Jordanians accepted an invitation to look at parts of the Israeli program around August 15, including production of isotopes for medical research which the GOJ expects to pursue once it obtains a 5-10 MW research reactor (ref B). Rosen indicated that the Israelis planned to update the U.S. Department of Energy on these discussions next month.

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